

*The Excellency of the Christian Revelation, as
it propoſeth to us a perfect Example.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd in the
Cathedral Church of St. *P A U L*,
September the 4th. 1699.

Being the Sixth, for this Year, of the
Lecture, Founded by the Honourable

Robert Boyle, Esq;

By *SAMUEL BRADFORD*,
Rector of St. *Mary le Bow*, and
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

L O N D O N,
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The Excellence of the Christian Religion, as
it respects to its perfect Example

SERMON

Preached in the

Cathedral Church of St. Paul

on Sunday the 10th 1799

Being the Sixth for the Year of the
Incarnation, founded by the Monastery

Robert Boyle, Esq.

By JOHN BRADFORD

Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty

Printed for the Printer at the Bible and
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I TIM. I. 15.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy
of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus
came into the World to save Sin-
ners, -----*

IN my former Lectures upon these Words, I have made it my business to shew, that the *Saying* here recommended by the Apostle, carries with it an intrinsic Evidence; the Method, in which our Lord Jesus Christ hath undertaken the Salvation of Sinners, being suited to the most just and reasonable Apprehensions of Mankind. He took upon him the Office of a *Mediator* between God and Men, in the execution of which Office, and in order to the reconciling Men to God, it was requisite, as I have observ'd, that amongst other things he should perfectly instruct Men in the Knowledge of God, and of themselves, and of the several particulars of their Duty. That he hath done this by the *Doctrine* which he taught, I have already prov'd, and am now farther to shew, that he hath added to his *Doctrine* an exact and perfect *Example*, thereby more fully to instruct us in all the particulars before-mention'd, as also to excite and encourage us to a Practice agreeable to our Knowledge.

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Had our Blessed Saviour left us only the Instructions and Precepts recorded in the New Testament, this had been a singular advantage to the Professors of Christianity, in order to the settling our apprehensions and judgments about divine things: but when we find recorded in the same Book a particular account of the circumstances of his Life, and how he managed himself suitably to the Instructions and Precepts which he left us, this must needs be a farther advantage to us, both for the enabling us to understand, and the engaging us to comply with his excellent Institution.

There was in truth since the general Corruption of Mankind both in their Tempers and Manners, very great need of some Pattern to be set us, of a Person in our own Nature, demeaning himself in all things according to the Will of God, and agreeably to the design of that Nature which he hath given us. Now such a Pattern is propos'd to us in the Person of our blessed Saviour, who *left us an*
 1. Pet. 2. 21. *Example, that we should follow his steps.*

In treating on this Argument, I must necessarily take my Idea of the Temper and Practice of our Saviour, from the History of the New Testament, and more particularly of the Evangelists, who, 'tis evident, wrote on purpose, that they might leave to the World a particular and standing Record thereof. And who indeed could do it so well, as they who convers'd intimately and constantly with him, or received their information immediately from them who did so? And in whom may we more reasonably confide, than in those, who as they appear'd

pear'd men of great Simplicity and Integrity whilst they liv'd, so upon all occasions expos'd their lives in Testimony of the Truth of what they Preach'd and Wrote ?

But I think I need make no Apology for proceeding upon their History, since it was not denied by the most Learned Adversaries of Christianity, when it first appear'd in the World, nor will be I presume by the Infidels of the present Age, that the Condition and Manner of our Saviour's Life were such as the Evangelists have declar'd.

If I were to insist upon his Miraculous Conception, with all the extraordinary Circumstances which attended both that and his Nativity, or upon the several Miracles affirm'd to be wrought by him during the time of his publick Ministry, or his Resurrection from the dead, and Ascension into Heaven, it would then be necessary for me to vindicate the truth of those matters of Fact : but forasmuch as my present business is to consider either the external Circumstances, or the Moral dispositions and actions of our Saviour, whilst he dwelt upon Earth, I may I think take it for granted, that the Truth of the History will be thus far allow'd me ; especially, since the Adversaries of Christianity pretend to make their advantage from the meannells of our Saviour's Circumstances, and some of them endeavour also to improve some passages of his behaviour, as related by the Evangelists, into objections against the truth of his Religion ; but how justly, will appear when we have more thoroughly consider'd the Argument we are upon.

There are therefore as I have already hinted, these *two* general heads to be consider'd with respect to the Life of our Saviour.

First, The External Condition and Circumstances of his Life.

Secondly, The manner of his behaviour in these Circumstances, *viz.* his Moral Dispositions and Actions; the former, as an act of the Divine Wisdom in so ordering the condition of our Saviour's Life upon Earth, as that it might prove an Instruction and Example to Mankind; and the latter, as an instance of our Saviour's Wisdom and Goodness in demeaning himself so, as might best serve to the same purpose. The former of these I shall consider more briefly, and the latter more at large.

First, Let us take into Consideration the External Condition and Circumstances of our Saviour's Life.

Now as to this, 'tis agreed on all hands, that his Condition of Life was in the esteem of the World extremely mean and obscure. He was born of a poor Woman, who was Espoused to a Man of an honest, but mean occupation. His first lodging was in a Stable, neither *Joseph* nor *Mary* being thought considerable enough to have room made for them in the Inn. His first Visitants were a company of poor Shepherds. The Countrey in which he had his Abode and Education, during his private Life, was *Galilee*, out of which it was thought no Prophet could arise, much less the Messiah. His Town was *Nazareth*, concerning which *Nathanael*

Luke 2. 7, 8.

John 7. 52.

John 1. 46.

thanahel made it a question, whether *any good thing could come out of it*. His Condition through the whole course of his Life was without either Wealth or secular Honour, nay attended with Poverty and Disgrace. He did, for the first *Thirty* years of his Life, live, as far as appears, with *Joseph*, or, if *Joseph* died within that space, with *Mary*, following the Occupation of his supposed Father, insomuch that the *Jews* stil'd him, not only *the Carpenters Son*, Matth. 13. 55. but *the Carpenter*. Mark 6. 3. When he enter'd upon his Publick Employment, he took no State upon him. He had no settled Habitation, nor certain Provision. He told one who offer'd to follow him, that *the Foxes* Mat. 8. 19, 20. *had holes, and the Birds of the air had nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay his Head*. He liv'd upon the Charity of his Friends; for so we read of *certain Women*, who were wont to *minister unto him* Luke 8. 3. *of their substance*. He was moreover continually Despis'd, Malign'd, and Persecuted, and at last Suffer'd a cruel Death, as a Malefactor, with all the Circumstances of Indignity.

'Tis true, we Christians say, and firmly believe, that our Lord was amply recompens'd for submitting to these mean and despicable Circumstances, by favors conferr'd upon him by the Divine Providence even in this Life, and much more by his Exaltation in Heaven after his Resurrection. As for instance, that although his Mother was a poor Woman, yet she was a Person of Exemplary Prudence, Virtue, and Piety, which are of much greater account with God, than Wealth and Honour; that he was Conceived and Born of her, whilst a pure Virgin, by the immediate Influence of the Almighty; that he

was

was constantly under the special Care and Conduct of the Divine Providence ; that there were several Divine Messages and Oracles relating to his Conception, his Nativity, and his following Management ; that the Shepherds which visited him were sent by Angels ; that some Learned and Inquisitive, and 'tis likely Honourable and Wealthy Persons, were by the Guidance of an extraordinary Star conducted from a Foreign Countrey, to pay their respects to him, as a *King* ; that he was not only attended by Angels upon all extraordinary Emergencies, but receiv'd special Communications and Influences from God himself ; that his Humane Nature was endued with the Divine Spirit *without measure*, and he thereby enabled to speak and act so, as never any other Man did ; and finally that he was *declar'd to be the Son of God with Power, by his Resurrection from the dead*. These are such things as, if believ'd by the Adversaries of the Christian Faith, would even in *their* judgment entirely take off the reproach of his External Circumstances. But forasmuch as my Method forbids me to consider these particulars, I wave them all, and do assert that the very Obscurity and Meanness of our Saviour's Condition, during his sojourning upon Earth, was design'd as a proper means for our Instruction.

John 3. 34.

Rom. i. 4.

It was in truth a most severe censure cast upon the Pride and Luxury of men, and a powerful Argument to convince us of the Vanity and Emptiness of this World, for the Son of God to accept of no better entertainment in it.

Mankind were sunk into an animal and sensual Life, and degenerated into a very inordinate admiration

ration and love of the World. An high Birth, eminent Rank and Quality, Honour, Wealth, and Pleasure, these were become the Idols of Men, whereby not only their Affections were entangled, but their very Judgments also corrupted. So that nothing could be more expedient, than that He, whom Providence design'd for an Instructor and Example to Mankind, He who was sent to rectify both their Judgments and their Dispositions, should by the very manner of his appearance amongst them, openly testify his disregard to all these things, being not only destitute of those Enjoyments, in which depraved Men are so apt to place their Felicity, but moreover expos'd to those Hardships and Sufferings, which they falsely account the worst of Evils, thus confirming by his own Example, what he taught by his Doctrine. 'Tis a known and memorable Passage of *Plato*; *ὁ δὲ Σίμω ἀστυνόμος, &c.* "That *Plato de Rep.*
 " to the completing of a Righteous Man, and ^{l. 2.}
 " making him thoroughly such, he must be Scourged, Tortur'd, Bound, have both his Eyes burnt out, and having suffer'd all sorts of Evils, to
 " Crown all he must be at last Impal'd or Crucified.

It was indeed this Condition which render'd our Blessed Saviour capable of exemplifying those admirable Virtues, which otherwise he could not have had occasion or opportunity to exercise, such as were most directly opposite to the Vices into which Men were degenerated, such as were most useful and necessary for Men to exercise in this present life, and such as it is most difficult for us in this degenerate and corrupt Estate to attain to; *viz.* a firm Faith.

Faith and Trust in God, an entire submission, and Resignation to his Will, Contentedness under all the Dispensations of his Providence, Meekness, Patience, Firmness and Constancy of Mind under great Provocations and severe Sufferings, together with a large and diffusive Charity, even in the midst of want.

Nay allowing what we Christians assert, that the Son of God voluntarily took upon him our Nature, and freely submitted to this condition of Humane Life, our Saviour did hereby farther express his utmost contempt of this vain World, together with a wonderful Condescension and Charity in doing all this for our good. By which means he became not only a very useful, but, also a general Example to all sorts and conditions of Men.

The greater part of Mankind are placed in a low and mean Condition, and stand in need especially of those Virtues which are proper to such a state. So that our Saviour by exemplifying the Virtues requisite to that Condition, became in the first place a Pattern to the greatest number of Men; and if we take in the consideration which I just now mention'd, of his voluntary submission to this State for our sakes, he at the same time propos'd himself as an eminent Pattern to the Great and Rich Men of the World likewise. Thus the Apostle argues, improving this Example of our Lord, to perswade to Humility and Charity. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, — emptied himself, taking upon him the form of a Servant, being made in the likeness of men, &c.* And again, *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he*

Phil. 2. 5, 6,
7, 8.

2 Cor. 8. 9.

he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

I should now pass to the other general Head which I propos'd; but that I may leave no difficulty in the way, it may be proper first to obviate an Objection that may be rais'd with respect to the account which the Evangelists have given us of our Saviour's Life; *viz.* That a considerable part of it is past over in silence, there being very little left upon Record concerning him till the Thirtieth Year of Luke 3. 23. his Age, when he enter'd upon his publick Ministry, in which he is supposed to have continued no longer than Three Years and an half: whereas, had he been design'd as a Pattern to Mankind, we might rather have expected a full and particular account of all that was said or done by him, from his Birth to his Death. To this I reply in the following particulars.

If we were not able to assign the just Reasons for this proceeding, it ought not however to pass for a reasonable Objection in this Case. For allowing (what is undeniably true) that the Adversaries of Christianity have nothing to lay to our Saviour's charge during his private Life, and (what I shall prove hereafter) that when he did appear in publick, his practice was highly Exemplary; 'tis sufficient. God might design him for a publick Example, for what space of time he pleas'd, and that for very wise and good Reasons, which we may not be able to guess at. And although, if we had all his Actions recorded from the beginning of his Life to the end, there would be more instances for our Instruction and Imitation; yet during that time in which

C he

he exercised his publick Ministry, there might be enough to answer these ends.

2. I add, that from the short and general account which the Evangelists have given us of the more private and retired part of our Saviour's Life, we have reason to look upon him, as a great Example of divers eminent Virtues, even during that State. *He went down (from Jerusalem) with Joseph and Mary, and was subject to them,* as St. Luke tells us. This at

Luke 2. 51.

first view was a Life of Innocency and honest Industry, spent in the constant exercise of Humility, Contentedness, Submission and Resignation to his Heavenly Father, and Obedience and Subjection not only to his real, but also to his reputed Earthly Parent; Virtues all of them necessary for the greater part of Mankind, and, as Experience teaches us, not easily attain'd and exercis'd by them. And if here again we take in the consideration of the Dignity of the Person, who, (as we Christians affirm) voluntarily subjected himself to this way of living, we shall still discover, that even this part of our Saviour's Life was farther Exemplary to us. For what could be a greater instance of wonderful Condescension and Goodness (as I observ'd before) than for the Son of God, for our sakes, to cloath himself with Humane Flesh, not to abhor the Virgins Womb, to pass through the States of Infancy and Childhood; to grow and improve by degrees, and, in a word, to accommodate himself to all the inconveniencies and infirmities of innocent Humanity? And how could he more effectually have exprest to us his contempt of this vain World, than by submitting freely to all those mean Circumstances, with which this part of his Life was attended? I

I observe farther that there were not wanting Instances, which all along discover'd him to be an extraordinary Person, such as were sufficient to attract the Eyes of Men towards him, and to prepare them by degrees for an acknowledgement of him, when he should make a more Publick appearance.

3.

I shall not insist upon those Oracular Dreams, and Angelical Apparitions, by which the Evangelists tell us he was made known to the blessed Virgin, to *Joseph*, and to the Shepherds, all which things *Mary* is said to have kept, and ponder'd in her heart; but shall only take notice of such passages recorded of him, as were the occasion of his being more publickly known and observ'd, both in *Bethlehem*, *Nazareth* and *Jerusalem* it self. St. *Luke* relates of the Shepherds, that after they had visited him, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it, wonder'd at those things which were told them by the Shepherds. St. *Matthew* informs us, that when the *Magi* came to *Jerusalem*, they made so publick an enquiry concerning the Birth of the King of the Jews, as to create Jealousie in *Herod*, and trouble to all *Jerusalem*; *Herod* upon that occasion first consulting the Chief Priests and Scribes, about the place of the *Messiah's* Birth; then sending for the *Magi*, and charging them to give him a particular account both of the occasion and the effect of their search, and at last, when he found himself disappointed by them, exercising an unparallel'd Cruelty upon the Infants of *Bethlehem*. All this must necessarily have excited the curiosity of many to enquire after and to observe this Child, as he grew up.

Luke 2. 15.

Luke 2. 17, 18.

Mat. 2. 1. &c.

Luke 2.22, &c.

We are farther inform'd, that when his Mother brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord, according to the Law of Moses, there were two Persons of good Note in the City, old Simeon, and Anna, who coming into the Temple at that instant, spake of him in very remarkable Terms, to all them that looked for redemption in Israel, so that Joseph and his Mother (and no doubt many more who were present) *marvell'd at those things which were spoken.*

ver. 42, &c.

At the Age of Twelve Years, we are again told that he accompanied his Mother and Joseph to Jerusalem, to attend at the Feast of the Passover, after the Custom of their Nation, and as others of his Age were us'd to do; but (which was singular at those years) *he tarried behind them* of his own accord, and was found in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors, not only *hearing them*, but also *asking them questions*, in such manner, that all that heard him were *astonish'd at his understanding and answers.* And when Mary express'd her concern, for his having tarry'd without their knowledge, he gave her a remarkable answer, which together with the other passages mention'd. *She is said to have kept in her heart, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* or, as the words may be well render'd, *in my Father's house?* declaring himself thereby *the Son of God, or the Messiah.*

ἐν τούτῳ ὅτε ἦν
ἰσὺς μω.

ver. 39, 40.

Both before and after this passage, all that the Evangelist farther sayes of him till his entering upon his publick Ministry is, that upon his first going to Nazareth, *the Child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit,*
filled

filled with Wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon him; and again upon his return thither at Twelve Years of Age, that *he increas'd in Wisdom, and in Stature*, ver. 52. *and in favor with God and Man*; both which expressions plainly signifie, that as he grew up from a Child to a Man, there appear'd a singular and eminent degree of Wisdom and Goodness in him, something so extraordinary, as to mark him out for an especial Favorite of God, and to render him admir'd and belov'd by all that convers'd with him.

It is generally assign'd as a probable account of our Saviour's forbearing to exercise his publick Ministry, till he enter'd upon his *Thirtieth* Year, that this was in correspondence with the Law of *Moses* given to the *Levites*, by which though he were not oblig'd, yet it was agreeable to his practice in other cases, thus to *fulfil all righteousness*, namely beginning his Ministry at the Age, at which the Ministers of God in that Nation were appointed to begin theirs. But,

As a closer Answer to this Objection I add, that an apparent, and a sufficient Reason why our Lord did not expose himself to more publick view and observation for a longer space of time, than we are told he did, and consequently the just account, why we have not any particular Record of the former part of his Life, is this, that the time of his publick appearance and Ministry was full as long as that untoward Generation could bear it. The Life which he was design'd to live was not what they expected in their *Messiah*, viz. a Life of secular Pomp and Grandure; but a serious, humble, self-denying, a devout, and truly good Life, directly contrary to the

the Manners, as well as the Notions of that Age, and therefore he no sooner began to make himself publickly known, but they presently malign'd and persecuted him, insomuch that he was forc'd often to withdraw himself from them, and by many instances of prudent management to decline their fury, till he knew *their hour* was fully come. So that had he appear'd sooner, he had been so much the sooner cut off. It was therefore the natural consequence of the evil temper of that generation of Men, which God did not think fit miraculously to over-rule, that our Saviour's Example was of no longer standing.

6. To take off this Objection entirely, I add, that the Example which he hath left us, and which is recorded in the New Testament, was such as abundantly to answer the design and end of it, as will I hope fully appear from the other general Head I propos'd to be spoken to, and to which I now proceed, *viz.*

Secondly, To consider the manner of our Saviour's behaviour, or the Moral dispositions and actions of his Life, with the several Virtues which he exemplified to us thereby. And here I am sensible I have a very copious Subject; but I shall reduce what I have to offer upon this Argument to as narrow a compass as I can.

- I. I shall begin with observing that the Life of our Blessed Saviour was truly Humane, I mean, such as was suited to the frame and condition of Humane Nature, and therefore fit to be propos'd as a Pattern to Mankind.

As

As he was made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; so abating only those instances, in which he acted as a *Prophet*, or rather as the *Messiah*, he acted just as it becomes us to do, affecting no Singularities, running into no Extravagancies, doing nothing but what was perfectly agreeable to *Humane Nature*, as it is of *God's Creation*.

He did not pretend to a Stoical Apathy; but as he had, so he freely discover'd the several innocent Affections and Passions, which are in other Men. He not only Hunger'd and Thirsted, was Weary and Faint; but he also Lov'd and Pity'd, Rejoyc'd and Sorrow'd and Wept, and was angry too upon just occasion. *John* is often stiled, *the Disciple whom* John 13. 23. *Jesus lov'd*. He lov'd the rest of his Disciples, as we are assur'd by the same Evangelist; but that v. 1. Disciple with a singular and special affection; and the same is said with respect to *Lazarus*, and his John 11. 5. two Sisters. At the return of the Seventy Disciples, and their relating the success which they had, we are told that *Jesus rejoyc'd in Spirit*. When he Luke 10. 21. went with a full resolution to raise his friend *Lazarus* from the dead, yet seeing *Mary and the Jews* John 11. 33. *which were with her weeping*, 'tis said, that he groan'd in Spirit and was troubled; and when he came to the place where he was lay'd, he so far sympathiz'd with the Company, as to weep also, which caus'd 35. some of them to say, *Behold, how he lov'd him!* His 35. Compassion is frequently made the occasion and the motive of his doing good both to the Souls and Bodies of Men. For so the Evangelist observes, that *when he saw much people, he was mov'd with compassion* Mar. 6. 34 &c. *towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd,*

Luke 7. 13.
 Luke 19. 41.

shepherd, and began first to teach them many things, and presently afterward wrought a Miracle to feed them. It was from the same Motive, that he rais'd the Widow's only Son, when he met his Body as it was carried out of the City to be buried, and beheld the Mother weeping. When he beheld the City of Jerusalem, and consider'd the evils that were many years after to befall it, he was so tenderly affected as to weep over it, and in very pathetical words to express his Grief for the Obstinacy and the Misery of its Inhabitants.

Nay he did not take upon him to be insensible of his own Sufferings. He had very quick and pungent Apprehensions of them before-hand, with a mixture of all the innocent Passions which are wont to accompany such apprehensions; he own'd his natural aversion to them, and utter'd very affecting complaints under them, as all the Evangelists assure us; by all which, provided he retain'd a just firmness and constancy of Mind, together with a becoming Submission and Resignation (as it will hereafter appear he did) he became so much the fitter Example to us, who by the frame of our Natures are unavoidably liable to the like Affections and Passions.

Mark 3. 5.

Nor did he only accommodate himself to us in expressing these more tender passions of Humane Nature; but he thought it not below him to be sometimes angry also. 'Tis expressly said, that *he look'd round about upon the Pharisees with anger, being griev'd for the hardness of their hearts*; and upon divers other just occasions, we find the same Passion mov'd in him, towards that Hypocritical and malicious

malicious Generation of Men. Nay in a lower degree, he was sometimes angry with his Disciples also, as particularly with *Peter*, when he would have tempted him to decline the Sufferings appointed for him. Matth. 16. 23.

As a farther proof of our Saviour's Life being truly Humane, 'tis observable that he had nothing peculiar in his way of living, in his Diet, his Habit, or the manner of his Converse in the World. Our Lord himself takes notice of this, when he compares his own Life with that of *John the Baptist*, and mentions the Remarks which the *Jews* made both upon the one and the other. *John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.* Matth. 11. 18, 19.
The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and sinners. As the Habit of *John* was peculiar, so his Diet was singular and spare, and his Conversation reserv'd. On the contrary our blessed Saviour appear'd, and eat and drank, and convers'd, as other grave and sober Men did, he frequented the usual places of resort, walk'd publickly through their Villages and Cities, talk'd freely with all sorts of people, eat with Publicans and Sinners, to the great offence of the Pharisees; and with the Pharisees too, Luke 5. 29. who, as he assures us, were much more unworthy of his Company. He accepted invitations, nay chap. 19. 5. sometimes invited himself to their Houses.

He lead indeed a single Life, as that which was most suitable to his high vocation; but he gave no other Precept to his Disciples, with respect to their chusing that state, but only in those Words, *He* Matth. 19. 12, *that is able to receive this saying, let him*

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receive

receive it, having said just before, that all men cannot receive it, save they to whom it is given. And to shew how far he was from censuring or despising those who liv'd in lawful and chaste Wedlock, he accepted an invitation to a Marriage, and wrought his first Miracle in favour of the Bridegroom and his Company. To which might be added the special Notice he took, and the tender Affection he express'd to young Children, taking them up in his arms, putting his hands upon them, and blessing them, and being much displeas'd with his Disciples for judging them unworthy of his regard.

John 2. 2, 11.

Mark 10. 13.

Matth. 14. 23.
Luke 6. 12.

To conclude this particular, He did not retire from the World, nor leave the Society of Mankind under the pretence of Devotion, but as he withdrew at convenient times, usually in the Evening or at Night, for the more private exercises of Piety, so he commonly spent the day in doing good to Men, esteeming Charity one of the best and surest Testimonies of Piety, as will appear farther hereafter. We read indeed of his retiring into the Wilderness, and abiding there forty days: but this was once for all, by an extraordinary impulse of that Spirit, which had newly anointed him to his high Office, and in order to the preparing him for the due discharge of it; and therefore as in this instance he is not propos'd to us as our Pattern, so in all that part of his Life in which he is so propos'd, we meet with nothing like it; but as his Instructions and Rules of Life were plain and intelligible, so the instances of his Piety and Virtue were natural and imitable. But to proceed,

II. Although

Although the Life of our Saviour was thus Humane, yet it was perfectly innocent and inoffensive; nay according to true reason, notwithstanding the perverse Judgment of the *Pharisees*, the more inoffensive, for being Humane, nothing being more apt to offend Persons of sound Judgment and honest meaning, than needless and affected singularity, or a vain pretence to something that is truly unnatural.

II.

He did no sin, faith one who was well acquainted with him, and who laid down his life for his sake. 1 Pet. 2. 22.
 He was *holy, harmless, undefil'd, separate from sinners*, faith another, who had reason to know his Character. But these were his Friends; had his Enemies nothing to lay to his Charge? He was so conscious of his Innocency, that he durst make his open appeal to the worst of them, all at once. *Which of you convinceth me of Sin?* They frequently *lay'd wait for him, seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him*; but all in vain, John 8. 46.
 his words being as unblameable as his actions. Luke 11. 54. 'Tis true, they sometimes lay'd to his Charge the worst of Crimes, representing him as a Blasphemer, a Deceiver, a loose and prophane Man, dangerous to the Government, and guilty of Treason against *Caesar*. But all this, when the grounds of their Accusation are consider'd, appears evidently, the result either of gross Ignorance, or perverse Malice.

He was no otherwise a Blasphemer or an Impostor, but as he took upon him to be the *Messiah*, or *Son of God*, for the proof of which he appeals both to their own Scriptures, and to the Works which he wrought amongst them. John 5. 36, 38

Loofness and Prophaneness were, his doing Works of Charity and Mercy on the Sabbath day, and his conversing with *Publicans* and *Sinners*, in order to the making them better Men; as to which he vindicates his practice unanswerably in several Discourses with them, wherein I am sure any serious Deist will allow him to have argued with great Wisdom, and to have been much too hard for his Accusers. For he plainly shews them, that they had not consider'd the practice of the best and most considerable Members of their own Church, in the like cases; nay that they did not reflect upon their own practice, and therefore would not allow him to do as much for a *Man*, as themselves would do for an *Ox*, or an *Ass*, on the Sabbath day; that they did not understand the reason and design of the Sabbath's being Instituted; that they were wholly Ignorant of the distinction between *Moral* and *Positive* Precepts; and finally that they had not yet learn'd the meaning of that passage in their own Scriptures, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. As to his being dangerous to the Government, or guilty of Treason against *Cæsar*, he ever carefully declin'd what might but look that way. He would not upon any occasion intermeddle in *Secular Affairs*, and therefore when one desir'd him but to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, he replied, *Man who made me a Judge or a Divider over you?* When he perceiv'd the People, apprehending him to be the *Messiah*, would have set him up for their *King*, he immediately withdrew from amongst them. When his Enemies put a Question to him, concerning paying tribute to *Cæsar*, with a design only to ensnare him,

Mat. 12. 3, &c.

Luke 13. 15.

Matthi. 9. 13.

Luke 12. 13, 14.

John 6. 15.

him, though for that reason he gave them an answer only in general terms, such as they could lay no hold on to his disadvantage, yet it was such as seem'd Luke 20. 25. evidently to favour the paying it; and he did at another time pay Tribute for himself and *Peter*, at the Expende of a Miracle, which whether it were to the use of the Temple, or to *Cesar*, was however an instance (as our Saviour himself makes it) of his care not to offend. When *Pilate* examin'd him about his being a *King*, he tells him, that *his Kingdom was not of this world*, and assigns that as the Reason why his Servants were not to fight for him. Matth. 17. 27.

To conclude this particular; as during the appointed time of his Ministry, he escap'd falling into their hands, because they could find nothing whereof to accuse him; so when they were at last determin'd right or wrong to cut him off, we are told, that they sought false witnesses against him, but found none: yea, though many came, yet found they none that could agree in their Evidence. But this is said by his Friends. Be it so; but the thing speaks it self. The matter alledged by the two that appear'd against him, was a manifest misinterpretation of his Words, they applying to the Temple, what he spake of his own Body. And after all, the High-Priest was able to find nothing to charge him with, but what he own'd himself, out of Reverence to the Name of God, by which he was adjur'd, namely, that he was the Son of God, or the Messiah. Matth. 26. 59, 60. Mark 14. 59. As for *Pilate*, he openly declar'd his Innocency, in most full and emphatical Terms. For when he had call'd together the chief Priests, and the Rulers, and the People, he said unto them, *Ye have brought this Man unto me, as* John 2. 21. Luke 23. 13, 14, 15.

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ver. 20, 22.

Matth. 27. 24.

one that perverteth the people ; and behold, I having examin'd him before you, find no fault in this Man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him; no nor yet Herod, &c. And he repeats it a second and a third time, expostulating the matter with them, *Why, what evil hath he done ? I have found no cause of death in him.* And at last, when he was prevail'd upon against his Conscience, to give him up into their hands, to shew that it was his settled Judgment, that he was Innocent, *he took water, and wash'd his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person : see ye to it.* And what could have been a fuller vindication of our Lord, than this was ?

But it may be objected, that there are some Passages related by the Evangelists themselves, which seem liable to exception, such as these following, *viz.* Our Saviour's allowing and justifying his Disciples, in their deviating from what may seem an innocent Custom, taken up from the Tradition of their Fathers, and generally practis'd by the Jewish Nation, namely, *to wash their hands before eating ;* and not only so, but severely rebuking and upbraiding the Scribes and Pharisees upon that occasion. Likewise his riding in a kind of Triumph into Jerusalem, and when he came thither taking upon him Authority, and by force driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. Farthermore, his speaking opprobriously of King Herod, saying, *Go and tell that Fox.* And lastly, his putting his Disciples in Mind of providing themselves with Swords, a little before his being Apprehended. These are all the Passages which I can recollect, which can with any

any pretence be Objected against what I have been alledging, of the Inoffensiveness of our Saviour's Life; of each of which I shall give a plain account in few words.

As to the *Three* first, I take them to be so many instances, in which our Saviour acted not as an ordinary Person; but as One who had receiv'd a special Commission from God, as he was a *Prophet*, nay, much more than a *Prophet*, the *Messiah* and *Son of God*, and as such he us'd a Freedom, and exercis'd an Authority, which might indeed prove offensive, but yet very well became his Character.

When he allow'd his Disciples in their *transgression* Matth. 15. 2. *sing the Tradition of the Elders, not washing their hands when they did eat bread*, 'tis plain, that he did not account the practice of the Scribes and Pharisees in that instance to be innocent. They used that Ceremony superstitiously, laying a great stress upon it, as if it had been expressly commanded by God, nay as if it had some Moral Goodness in it, and *to eat with unwashen hands really defil'd a man*. For this Reason our Lord is said to have call'd the multitude, and said unto them, *Hear and understand. Not that which goeth into the Mouth defiles a Man: but that which cometh out of the Mouth, this defileth a Man*. Nay, they did not only urge this, and other of their Traditions, as necessary to be observ'd, *teaching for Doctrines, the Commandments of men*; but as ver. 9. he farther tells them, *they transgress even the plainest and most indispensable Commands of God, by their Traditions*; for which he chargeth them with gross ver. 3, &c. Hypocrisie, and rebukes them severely. And certainly it very well became him, if he were the *Messiah*,

ver. 14.

ver. 12,

13.

John 10. 22.

Matth. 23. 1, 2,
3, 4.

Messiah, to rectifie the Peoples Apprehensions in a matter of this great importance, and to teach them wherein Purity or Holiness did consist ; as likewise openly to expose the Ignorance and the Hypocrisie of those *blind Guides*, as he there calls them. And therefore when *his Disciples* upon that occasion said to him, *Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying ? He answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* We never read, that either he did himself, or allow'd his Disciples to transgress any *Divine Law*, rightly understood ; so far from that, that he complied with all *Humane Institutions*, that were truly innocent. We meet with no Objection made against his Behaviour in the *Temple*, or in the *Synagogues*, to which he constantly resorted, though there were many Usages in both those places, which had no other foundation but Humane Institution or Custom. He celebrated *the Feast of Dedication*, which is known to have been appointed by Men, not by God. Nay he else-where admonish'd *his Disciples and the multitude*, that since *the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's seat*, all therefore whatsoever they bid them observe, (*viz.* as far as it was agreeable to *Moses*, whose Interpreters they were, or should have a fair probability of being so, even though they impos'd heavier burdens than *Moses* ever intended, as the Words following seem to imply, yet if it were within the bounds of innocent practice) *that they should observe and do, though not do after their works ; for they said, and did not ;* where he carefully distinguish'd between the *Men*, and their *Office*, commanding respect to be shew'n to the one, when it was not due to the other.

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As to our Lord's Riding in a kind of Triumph into *Jerusalem*, a little before his Crucifixion, ^{'tis} Mat. 21. 1, &c. evident, that he then own'd himself the *Messiah*, by taking upon him to fulfil a Prophecy relating to him: but he did it in such manner as to shew plainly, that he pretended not to an Earthly Kingdom, nor design'd to give the Civil Power the least disturbance. Thus the Text sufficiently intimates, as the Evangelist cites it from the Prophet, *Tell ye the daughter* ver. 4, 5. *of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, How!* Not as the Kings of the Earth, in Pomp and Grandure; but meek (or lowly) *sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass*; not usher'd in with Guards of Souldiers; but with the Acclamations of the well-meaning and unarmed Multitude. And when he was come into the City, all the Authority he there exercis'd, was, where it was proper for him to do it, in *his Father's house*, driving out of the Temple ver. 12. those that had profan'd it, which he must reasonably be understood to have done, as he was *the Son of God*. And indeed from the Success he had, in their leaving the Temple without resistance, both upon this and a former occasion, when he exercis'd the same Authority, it may well be inferr'd, that John 2 14. both his Commission and his Power were in these instances extraordinary.

As to his styling *Herod, that Fox*, it admits of Luke 13. 32. the same answer. Whosoever is sent with a special Commission from God, is in the execution of that Commission greater than the greatest Prince upon Earth. This no reasonable Man will deny; and that our Lord in this instance took upon him to be thus Commission'd, is evident from the account

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Luke 13. 31, which the Evangelist here gives. When the Pharisees bad him depart thence, because Herod would kill him, he said to them, Go ye and tell that Fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected : Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following : for it cannot be that a Prophet perish out of Jerusalem. Where he styles himself a Prophet, lays claim to a Miraculous Power, and declares himself appointed to discharge an Office, which he should continue to do till the time determin'd of God was come.

As to the remaining Instance, whosoever will consider the Text fairly, will easily be satisfied, that our Saviour's meaning was not to put his Disciples upon providing Swords for his defence, but only by a Symbolical way of speaking, to forewarn them of the distresses to which they were presently to be expos'd. For he had no sooner said, *He that hath no Sword, let him sell his Garment and buy one*; but he immediately adds, *For I say unto you, that this which is written must needs be accomplished in me, And he was reckon'd amongst the Transgressors*; for the things concerning me have an end; whereby he plainly enough intimated, that he knew it was determin'd, that he should be then given up into his Enemies hands, and consequently could not desire them to attempt his rescue in vain. And accordingly when they said, *Lord, behold here are two Swords*, he reply'd, *It is enough*. Had he design'd to make use of their assistance for his defence, it had not been enough to have had two Swords; but by this short answer, he intimated, that he meant no such thing; as 'tis certain he did not, by his commanding

manding *Peter* to sheath his Sword, as soon as he ver. 50, 51. had drawn it; and his healing the Wound which it had made. So that notwithstanding the several Objections above-mention'd, we may justly affirm, that our Saviour's demeanour was truly Innocent and Inoffensive.

There was farther observable in the Life of our Saviour perfect Simplicity and Integrity, mix'd with exact Prudence.

III.

I joyn these together, as being rarely found in the same Person; but in our Blessed Saviour they were so perfectly joyn'd, as neither of them in the least to intrench upon the other.

His Simplicity and Integrity appear'd, in his free and open Conversing with all sorts of people, without any other design but the doing good to their Souls or Bodies. Whosoever came to him with an honest desire to be instructed, he readily admitted them, and discours'd plainly with them, in order to the informing their Judgments or directing their Practice. He instructed his Disciples upon all occasions, in such Truths as might be useful to them, resolving their doubts, and explaining to them what they did not well apprehend at the first hearing. He never flatter'd them with vain hopes of Secular Preferments; but often forewarn'd them of his own and their Sufferings. He treated them with that Freedom, which, as he himself told them, was us'd towards *Friends*, not *Servants*, discovering to them John 15. 25. as much of the Will of God, as they could bear to know. When at any time they misbehav'd themselves, he, admonish'd and reprov'd them, always kindly,

kindly, but more or less sharply according to the occasion. In conversing with his Enemies, he freely rebuk'd them for their Vices, detected and expos'd their Hypocrisie, and *told them the Truth* so plainly, that for that reason *they sought to kill him*. He very often said enough to convince them, that he own'd himself the *Messiah*, and they apprehended as much, though he did it usually in such Terms, as they could not lay hold of, till he had finish'd his Ministry; and then, when he knew that the doing so would immediately expose him to their Malice, yet *being adjar'd by the High-Priest*, he plainly own'd himself *the Christ, the Son of God*, and as freely confest to Pilate, that he was *the King of the Jews*. So conscious was he, that his Life had been all of a piece, that when *the High-Priest ask'd him of his Disciples and of his Doctrine*, he could make his Appeal in those words, *I spake open'y to the World, I ever taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them. Behold, they know what I said.* He knew so assuredly that he could not be charg'd with the least falshood throughout the course of his Life, that he could say to Pilate, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the Truth.*

His exact Prudence appear'd as evidently in disciplining his Disciples, gradually as they were able to bear. To which purpose he consider'd their Prejudices, and reveal'd that to them by parcels and degrees, which they could not receive all at once. His being appointed to suffer, and their obligation

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to imitate him, were Truths necessary to be known by them, but hard to be receiv'd; therefore he often gave them hints thereof, without insisting long at a time upon them, making them still more sensible of them, as the time drew near. He tells them, that he had forbore to say divers things to them *from the beginning, because he was with them*, which yet he thought fit to impart before he left them; he deliver'd to them *in Parables*, what they could not bear in express terms. At the very last he refer'd some things to the Revelation of the Spirit, after his Resurrection, because *they could not bear them then*. And for the same reason he did not put them upon some Exercises, that of *fasting* in particular, not only as being unseasonable whilst *he was with them*, but because they were not yet sufficiently prepar'd and dispos'd for the Severities of Religion.

But more especially the great Prudence of our Saviour's Life was evidenc'd, by his managing himself in such manner, as that notwithstanding all the Craft and Malice of his Enemies, he did not fall into their hands, till he had *finish'd the work which God had given him to do*. To which purpose, when at any time he perceiv'd their designs against him, he immediately withdrew to some other place, and thereby escap'd, of which the Evangelists give us many instances. Nay, when sometimes they appear'd more favourably inclin'd towards him, yet *he did not commit himself to them, because he knew what was in them*. Upon the same account, he sometimes forbid those whom he had Cur'd, to divulge his Miracles, and at other times *charg'd his Disciples* not to say that *he was the Christ*. When his Adversaries

John 16. 4,

ver. 25,

ver. 12, 13.

Matth. 9. 14,
15, 16, 17.

John 2. 23, 24.

Matth. 8. 4.

Matth. 16. 25

saries of all sorts came to tempt him, by putting
 Mat. 22. 15, &c. captious Questions to him, he gave them such An-
 swers, as they could not possibly make any advan-
 Mat. 21. 23. tage of. When they demanded of him *by what*
Authority he asked, he replied by asking them ano-
 ther question, which he knew they durst not An-
 swer. When they askt his Opinion about giving
 Tribute to *Cesar*, he return'd such an Answer, as
 sent them away with Silence and Admiration. And
 this may serve as a *Third Instance*, wherein the Life
 of our Blessed Saviour is an Instruction and Pattern
 to us. The main Instances are yet behind, which
 I must reserve for my next *Lecture*.

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